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State of Louisiana Selected as "Model for Change" in Juvenile Justice Reform by John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Foundation Awards State Up to \$1.5 Million a Year for Five Years

Baton Rouge, LA— Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco announced today that the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has selected Louisiana for participation in a national initiative designed to identify and accelerate promising statewide models for juvenile justice systems reform.

At a State Capitol press conference, Blanco, joined by Laurie Garduque, director of the MacArthur Foundation's juvenile justice grant making area, announced Louisiana's participation in "Models for Change: Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice."

"Our selection as a 'Model for Change' is recognition that Louisiana is a national leader in efforts to reform juvenile justice. Not only does MacArthur's decision acknowledge that Louisiana is moving in the right direction, but this new partnership will help us accelerate and expand our reform efforts. We are committed to building a comprehensive system of community-based services through innovative alternatives and strong partnerships," Blanco said.

Louisiana joins Pennsylvania and Illinois as early participants in the "Models for Change" initiative. Work in Pennsylvania has been underway for the past year and in Illinois for about six months.

"The goal of this initiative is to promote a juvenile justice system that is rational, effective, and developmentally sound," said Garduque. "It should be a system that holds young offenders accountable for their actions, provides for their rehabilitation, protects them from harm, increases their life chances, and manages the risk they pose to themselves and to public safety. It is a tall order, but we are seeing states across the country—Louisiana is a leader among them—that are recognizing you cannot deal with the

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problem of youthful offenders by simply acting as if they are no longer young and consigning them to a criminal justice system designed for adults.”

Garduque said that the MacArthur Foundation does not believe there is a single model for juvenile justice system reform. Part of the reason for its state-by-state approach is to encourage development of different strategies for reform and an array of best practices, knowing that other states will be paying close attention and looking for ideas that can work in their own systems.

Overview of the Statewide Initiative

Initially, participation in the initiative will mean grants of up to \$1.5 million per year for the next five years in Louisiana, starting with a planning phase and then moving to implementation. Funds will go to state and local agencies, nonprofit organizations, and others engaged in juvenile justice efforts. Priority will be given to changes that trigger improvement throughout the state’s juvenile justice system. The MacArthur partnership requires the development of a statewide work plan designed to guide and focus Louisiana’s reform efforts. The work plan will serve as the blueprint for further grant making by the MacArthur Foundation.

“Louisiana is changing the face of juvenile justice, and it is an honor to have the MacArthur Foundation as a partner, particularly at this stage of our reform,” Louisiana Office of Youth Development Deputy Secretary Simon Gonsoulin said. “We know that to be truly effective, we have to build a strong support network for youth and families in every community of the state. That means strengthening alliances and helping community organizations develop the kind of service capacity that will most benefit youngsters in their area. The MacArthur Foundation’s assistance will speed this process and help ensure that we build the kind of system that works for youth, their communities and the state.”

Louisiana’s reform effort gained momentum two years ago when the Legislature passed the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2003. Then last year, in one of her first actions as governor, Blanco made juvenile justice reform a top priority of her administration by ordering the separation of the Office of Youth Development from the Department of Corrections. This change underscored the new emphasis of juvenile

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justice in Louisiana from corrections to one centered on the treatment and rehabilitation of youth.

The state partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Mark Steward, the director of Missouri's Department of Youth Services, to develop and implement strategies for reforming secure care facilities and transitioning to more community-based services that keep young people closer to home. In addition to redesigning facilities and youth programs, the reform includes recruiting and training Youth Care Workers and adopting a more family-centered approach, including child and parent orientation programs and home-style family rooms for family therapy. The agency also has created the new position of family ombudsman to provide information and support for youth and their families.

This summer, OYD is kicking off the first phase of its regional pilot in the New Orleans area with the opening of a new dormitory at Bridge City. It also is holding regional meetings to gather input on its five-year strategic reform plan, which it will release this fall.

The Framework for Change

While the structures will vary from state to date, MacArthur Foundation's juvenile justice initiative is grounded in eight principles that reflect an emerging consensus about juvenile justice: fundamental fairness, recognition of the differences between juveniles and adults, recognition of individual differences, recognition of potential, safety, personal responsibility, community responsibility and system responsibility. Changes that bring a state's juvenile justice system more closely in line with these principles—the core values of the initiative—would be a Models for Change reform.

The National Perspective

The Models for Change initiative also makes grants to national organizations that together constitute a national resource bank. It will be a source of knowledge, tools, training, technical assistance, and strategies for advocacy and public education available to all who are participants in the initiative. As a participant, Louisiana will have access to—and serve as part of—the national resource bank.

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As reforms begin to show results, the Foundation will encourage expansion of those efforts. Through grant support for the National Center for Juvenile Justice, located in Pittsburgh, PA, materials and resources will be developed that can be used by other states.

“We believe in the capacity of individual states to make significant progress in the way they work with juvenile justice issues,” said Garduque. “What is learned in one state can be useful to those engaged in similar work in other states, especially as early participants in the initiative—like Louisiana—produce

individuals and groups that can carry the message of what is happening here to others around the country. Success will come as states recognize that barriers to change can be overcome—and that there are many pathways to reform.”

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, headquartered in Chicago, is a private, independent grant making institution dedicated to helping groups and individuals foster lasting improvement in the human condition. With assets of approximately \$4.8 billion, the Foundation makes grants of approximately \$200 million each year. For more information about the Foundation, please visit www.macfound.org. Or contact Jen Humke, MacArthur Foundation (312) 726-8000 (w).

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